

BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SPECIAL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2007

A special workshop of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held on Tuesday, October 9, 2007, in the Cafeteria of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI. William A. Estrella, Jr., Chairperson, called the workshop to order at approximately 7:27 p.m.

Present: William A. Estrella, Jr., Marjorie J. McBride, Paul Silva, William M. Ojide, Paul E. Brule, Diana B. Campbell, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; Edward P. Mara, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Melinda L. Thies, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction; Mary Cerullo, Executive Director of Literacy K-12, Elementary Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; Jane F. Correia, Director of Administration and Finance; and Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

Absent: David L. Dugan

WHAT DO WE DO WHEN COLT ANDREWS IS FINISHED?

Superintendent's Revised Recommendation #S2007-37 re:

Elementary Program Changes for September 2008

Mr. Estrella opened by saying that we are not going to make everybody happy and recounted a story about the ticket seller at the Mt. Hope football games; when he first attended the games the ticket seller was at a card table in the rain and cold so he set up a tent, then built a shed. Now the step to the shed is not high enough, there is no heat in the shed and there are no lights. Mr. Estrella wants to move the port-a-johns near the ticket booth to avoid the slippery slope that gets muddy after it rains; the ticket lady said it will smell near the ticket booth.

Dr. Mara presented the revisions he made to the plan, after listening to the School Committee and the public. The plan is as follows:

The following is a revised plan, that if adopted, will include the closing of the Byfield and Reynolds Schools and the moving of the Byfield community and the Reynolds Arts Magnet Program to the newly renovated Colt Andrews Complex. The timetable to accomplish this goal has been altered.

In order to accomplish this goal some of the following elements and/or conditions must be in place.

- 1. Total classroom capacity at the Colt Andrews Complex: 432 students
(3 tracks @ 24 per class (18 classes total))**

Proposal: Ks and 1s remain at 21 students per class

2. Current Byfield enrollment 215 students

Current Reynolds enrollment 234 students (76 Warren; 158 Bristol)

Total: 449

Proposal:

„X All 215 Byfield students move to Colt Andrews as the construction is completed.

„X The Bristol Reynolds Arts Magnet students will remain at their present site for the 08/09 school year only. The building will close June 2009 and the program will move to the Colt Andrews School.

Consideration: The Warren Arts Magnet students may elect to become part of the Hugh Cole community next year, however it will not be necessary.

3. The Hugh Cole Community will be developing a focused model with the possibility of using multiple and emotional intelligences as a guide.

4. The Reynolds Arts Magnet Program will move to Colt Andrews in September 2009, which will integrate all students. The Byfield population will already be occupying the building, working parallel on growing the Arts Magnet Program.

Proposal: The Byfield population will remain a neighborhood school community at Colt Andrews. All current Bristol Arts Magnet students will continue in the program. Natural attrition over the 08/09 school year should solve the number problem. We will carefully monitor the spaces available in order to maintain a reasonable class size and some growth space. These spaces would be filled from the "wait list." Students would still enter the Arts Magnet Program, outside of the "neighborhood district" through a lottery system.

Considerations:

„X The strength in this plan is the time that will be given to provide professional development for our staffs, both at Hugh Cole and Colt Andrews. The school communities will grow over the year.

„X Parents would be given an opportunity to learn more about the programs offered. We would be working together and not adversely. All stakeholders would be involved in the planning and development of their school community.

„X All teachers (after the job fair) would be trained in the HOTS model and arts integration along with the focus at Hugh Cole. Staff would also grow with the program and make it their own.

„X The teaching staff at Reynolds would assist in planning professional development as well as the staff at Hugh Cole.

„X Byfield students would feel special about their movement into their school and will be experiencing the beginning of the arts/technology integration model. The transition of the Reynolds students and parents would be more successful.

„X There will be one Principal for both the Reynolds and Colt Andrews buildings during the transition.

Financial

There will be some cost savings in this plan. The savings will come from eliminating one principal. There will be no need for new teaching staff. The cost of maintaining the Reynolds School for one year would only include the utilities. No new projects would be initiated. The Byfield School would be off line. I would propose an Administrative Assistant to supervise one of the buildings as we transition next year. This individual may also serve to direct and drive the growth of the Arts/Technology Programs at Colt Andrews. I am confident the Assistant Principal at Hugh Cole can serve the same role at that school. Professional development for the staff will be needed and will incur a cost.

I feel confident this revised plan is educationally sound, addresses the issues that have been presented, will engage our communities and most of all demonstrated that we listened and can provide some flexibility. It is good for the district and does not further divide the school communities. In the end, the same goals have been accomplished.

Mr. Estrella said the recommendations to the School Committee will then be:

S2007-37 re: Elementary Program Changes for September 2008, and Superintendent's Recommendation #S2007-38 needs to be expanded to Xre: Decommissioning of Main Street on July 31, 2008, Byfield on July 31, 2008, and Reynolds on July 31, 2009.

Budget/Facilities Subcommittee Update

Mr. O'Dell reported the Subcommittee took action on the Superintendent's recommendation and was intentionally vague Xthat the Budget Facilities Subcommittee recommend to the full School Committee that they decommission the Reynolds and Byfield buildings according to the Superintendent's schedule. They considered only the facilities cost savings, including projected work needed, which are projected as \$599,313 for Byfield and \$500,650 for Reynolds. However, other than utilities, only an electrical upgrade of approximately \$60,000 would have to be done to keep Reynolds open for one more year.

Mr. Estrella mentioned three emails he received X1) concerns about the Arts Magnet Program overshadowing the basic needs and rights of the Byfield community, 2) thank you note to Mr. Saviano for attending a Town Meeting, and 3) encouragement to attend the School Committee meeting and Karen and Paul doing the dirty work"; he also received an article about socio-economic integration.

School Committee Comments/Concerns

Mr. Saviano: Why co-mingle the students in Colt Andrews when the

parents and teachers stated it would not work at Hugh Cole? If we are going to spend \$60,000 to upgrade the electricity at Reynolds then turn it over to the Town, why not customize the Colt or Andrews building for Arts Magnet and ensure the success of the program? Dr. Mara said there is not enough space to fit the children into one building. Mr. Saviano asked if this was discussed with the architects or engineers. Dr. Mara said he is going on the plan that is in his office. However, Mrs. McBride addressed this with the architect, and simply, there is no access and egress in Colt separate and apart from the one there, so Ks and first graders cannot be in Colt and in order to install bathrooms and sinks, concrete in the floor and ceilings would have to be dug out for drainage and the sewer connection would have to be found. That correspondence will be forwarded to the full Committee.

Mrs. Lynch: She and Mr. Silva met with Dr. Mara last week and discussed concerns about the animosity created among parents; they are trying to get the information to answer the parents' questions. Mrs. Lynch is adamant that the Warren students are not asked to leave the program. This revised plan allows for a new program to be developed correctly, gives us a year to put a committee together and develop a program that could be state of the art; if parents are not interested in either an arts focus or technology focus, they have three great neighborhood high-performing school. Would science and technology programs be available across town lines? Dr. Mara responded that this would have to be looked into and would be

wonderful. If there are two different focuses how would that affect the teachers' movement? Dr. Mara said this issue would be discussed with BWEA and would be done correctly; there will be the same number of students so there will be the same number of jobs.

Mr. O'Dell: Questioned if one program would be created at Colt Andrews for the Byfield and Reynolds students and if the professional development costs have been calculated. Dr. Mara confirmed there would be one program at Colt Andrews and that Title I funds would support the bulk of professional development costs.

Mr. O'Dell asked about administrative support in each building and transitioning of students and two years of adjustment. Dr. Mara explained that he supports administrative presence in each building; in the first plan, all the students would move at the same time so he recommended a Coordinator. The one principal would travel between Colt Andrews and Reynolds; an administrative assistant situation would not be an issue. Dr. Mara also said the District is very creative about welcoming new people into the schools and as one parent said last week, kids adjust very well.

Mr. Estrella asked about the difference in cost between an Arts Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant. Dr. Mara explained that a Coordinator does not have to be a teacher, an Administrative Assistant would have to be certified.

Mr. Silva: Not sure what the "dirty work" is. He stated that Mrs.

Campbell, before she became a Committee member, commented that the community needs to be encouraged to be involved, then the educational process would improve. Dr. Mara's plan leaves room for this involvement. And Mr. Estrella has likened running a school system to running a ship, but this looks like a tidal wave is turning this ship. Dr. Mara's changes to the plan are responsive to the parents' concerns as well as his and allow teams to deal with a new model at Hugh Cole and a team to deal with the expansion of the Arts Magnet Program. Dr. Mara said the teams would be in place quickly and details of the plan would come from them as well as the transportation coordinator.

Mrs. Campbell: Mentioned the concern of parents last spring about two buildings sharing one principal and questioned the timing of implementation of the plan that is approved by the Committee on October 17, and if Byfield students moving to Colt Andrews would be in an arts program. Dr. Mara said whatever plan the Committee approves will be implemented right away and the Byfield students will be in an arts integrated program for nearly a year and will be introduced to all components of the program. Mrs. Campbell asked, since students are resilient, why not do it all at one time. Dr. Mara said it really came down to professional development and allowing time for both communities to grow.

Mr. Brule: Asked the Superintendent if he is going to be here in 2009, as his contract ends in 2008. Dr. Mara said he could not answer that

and it was not fair to ask him that question in public. Also in response to Mr. Brule, Dr. Mara said the students would occupy both Colt and Andrews in September if they are complete. Mr. Brule said in time we will have a new School Committee and a new superintendent and to avoid putting a burden on a lot of people he cannot agree with keeping buildings open.

Mr. Estrella: Has been asked why we are rushing; he does not believe we are; the idea of closing buildings has been discussed in 1995 and the most recent study by Mt. Vernon Group recommends closing buildings. Programming is a separate issue. There are changes in the community; the more places you have heat and power and support services the more it costs. He asked Attorney Henneous for the report on legalities of the lottery as soon as possible.

Mrs. McBride: Cannot justify keeping another building open. When the bond was being worked up we had thought we would need more room but we don't, because after the Warren students return to Warren there are still 40 spaces, also, we'd be right back where we started from. Three years ago we did not need significant training time, now we need ten months and a year? Mrs. McBride mentioned that on 08-09 there will be no K children at Reynolds. The SALT report was very clear that the Reynolds and Byfield buildings are substandard. Last spring, the Superintendent argued that every building deserves a principal. She will not support the second plan but she will support the first. There is no reason why the Reynolds

and Byfield students cannot go to Colt Andrews.

Mr. Saviano: Asked how much choice do we give to students who have not won the lottery, many for three years, and many are very disappointed. Also, how is the Arts Magnet Program at Colt Andrews able to grow when we are limited by the number of seats. Many families are bitter about not getting into the Arts Magnet Program. We are trying to satisfy as many people as possible. We talk about professional development at Byfield between now and next September; if we can do it for the Byfield kids and the Reynolds students are already adjusted, why do we have to hold back a whole year? We have a fiduciary responsibility to first the children, then the taxpayers. There are going to be winners and losers.

Discussion followed about K students at Reynolds in 08-09, no room for them all at Colt Andrews, K and first grade class sizes, and only three K classes in Colt Andrews.

Mr. Silva commented that with a science and technology integrated model at Hugh Cole open to the entire district, and the arts program in Bristol, we could be facing a bussing issue. Time is needed for professional development and community input.

Mrs. Lynch: Commented that Mrs. McBride has said many times that the bond proposal didn't take into account programs; this is an insult to the Arts Magnet community. Mrs. Lynch asked why the 76

Warren Arts Magnet children are being treated as expandable; they are equal to the 76 children sitting in Byfield and shouldn't be suffering the consequences. All the PTO officers at Reynolds are Warren parents.

Mr. O'Dell: Does not want to see anyone unhappy; he can wholeheartedly support the first plan. Keeping Reynolds open for another year could cost upwards to \$150,000; from a budgetary standpoint, this is a reckless abuse of taxpayers' money. We have wonderful professional people who can get the job done in nine months; he cannot support a program that will spend those kinds of dollars.

Mr. Estrella announced that at the October 17th meeting there will be no public comment or discussion or legal advice, only the Superintendent's recommendations. He will ask for a motion to entertain the recommendation and if the motion carries he will entertain discussion on the recommendation from the School Committee and from the public, who will be limited to one opportunity to speak for two minutes. The School Committee will be able to debate, discuss and state their positions once only; Roberts Rule will be followed. A vote will be taken on that recommendation unless it is amended or the Superintendent withdraws or changes it. Mr. Estrella asked the Superintendent not to make any changes in that recommendation before the meeting. The first recommendation will be regarding the elementary program changes for September 2008

and September 2009 as documented in the revised plan presented on October 9, 2007.” The second recommendation regarding the closing of buildings will specify Main Street as of July 31, 2008, Byfield as of July 31, 2008 and Reynolds as of July 31, 2009.

Mr. O'Dell asked, if the hearing is for the decommissioning of buildings, why do we need the first recommendation? Mr. Estrella said the Committee said two. Attorney Henneous advised that the Superintendent's recommendation will be what it is, the School Committee will vote, and by virtue of a public hearing, the public should be allowed to comment on the agenda items only. If the Superintendent chooses to separate his recommendation into two, that is appropriate. Mr. Estrella said the official notice went in as two recommendations. Mrs. McBride said the public hearing is to close buildings; the Colt Andrews Subcommittee meeting materials are not needed to vote on the Superintendent's recommendation on programming; should it be two separate meetings? Attorney Henneous reiterated, that one recommendation from the Superintendent is appropriate, two recommendations are appropriate.

Mr. Estrella stated again that it has been submitted as two separate items, it is the School Committee's responsibility and authority to take action. Mrs. Lynch commented that if the Committee decided to close schools and not vote on a recommendation for programming, parents will panic ;V it is only fair to make both decisions at once.

ADJOURNMENT ;V 9:08 PM

There being no further business to discuss, Mrs. McBride, seconded by Mr. Brule, motioned to adjourn at 9:08 PM. Mr. Estrella said again that he will entertain discussion from the public at the public hearing. The motion to adjourn passed by a vote of 5 to 3 with Mrs. Lynch, Mr. Saviano and Mr. Silva voting no.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Silva, Secretary

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